

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-07 SP-02 INR-05 L-01 CIAE-00

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APPROVED BY IO:DRTOUSSAINT

IO/UNP:GBHELMAN

NEA/PAB:PLANDE(DRAFT)

NEA/INS:ROBER(DRAFT)

S/PC:TTHORNTON(DRAFT)

INR/RNA:GGRIFIN(DRAFT)

L/NEA:WSRHODES(DRAFT)

L/UNA:DSTEWART(DRAFT)

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 243458

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UN, BG, IN

SUBJECT: FARAKKA BARRAGE

1. SUMMARY: WE ARE CONSIDERING FLOATING WITH UNGA
PRESIDENT AMERASINGHE AN IDEA FOR BREAKING THE PRESENT
STALEMATE BETWEEN BAHGLADESH AND INDIA ON FARAKKA
BARRAGE. AMERASINGHE IS UNIQUELY POSITIONED BY HIS
OFFICE AND NATIONALITY TO BRING THE PARTIES TOGETHER
IN AN EFFORT TO HEAD OFF A USELESS CONFRONTATION IN
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THE GA. WE ARE THINKING OF SUGGESTING RECOURSE TO A

NEUTRAL TECHNICAL EXPERT OR TECHNICAL COMMISSION WHOSE MANDATE, AT LEAST INITIALLY, WOULD BE LIMITED TO FACT-FINDING. EMBASSY VIEWS ARE REQUESTED, BUT NO PORTION OF THIS PROPOSAL SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH HOST GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. IN PROPOSING THIS INITIATIVE WE DO NOT BELIEVE U.S. SHOULD TAKE SIDES ON THE SUBSTANCE OF FARAKKA DISPUTE OR ENGAGE ITSELF DIRECTLY IN ATTEMPTS TO BRING THE TWO PARTIES TOGETHER. IN PART THIS IS BECAUSE DIRECT U.S. INVOLVEMENT WOULD BE REJECTED OUT OF HAND BY INDIA. WE DO, HOWEVER, HAVE A BROAD INTEREST IN SEEING THIS DISPUTE RESOLVED QUIETLY AND OUR PREFERENCE CONTINUES TO BE THROUGH BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS. WE CAN UNDERSTAND

BANGLADESH'S INTEREST IN TRYING TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE PROBLEM, BUT DOUBT THAT THIS IS A FRUITFUL COURSE. WE DO NOT SEE HOW A UN DEBATE CAN MOVE MATTERS FORWARD. ONE CONDITION OF PROGRESS TOWARD SOUTH ASIAN STABILITY SINCE 1972 HAS BEEN THE WILLINGNESS OF THE SUBCONTINENT NATIONS TO DEAL WITH THEIR PROBLEMS BY THEMSELVES WITHOUT UNDUE INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDE POWERS. ACCORDINGLY OUR INTEREST IN REGIONAL STABILITY WOULD BE SERVED IF SOME WAY COULD BE FOUND TO GET THE TWO SIDES OFF THE POLITICAL SOAPBOX AND BACK TO ADDRESSING THE TECHNICAL PROBLEMS AT ISSUE.

3. THE IMMINENCE OF A CONFRONTATIONAL UN DEBATE MAY PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR THE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO RESPOND TO POSITIVE, PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR MOVING THE DISPUTE BACK INTO MORE PRODUCTIVE CHANNELS. WE ASSUME, HOWEVER, THAT SIMPLY A RETURN TO BILATERAL TALKS WITHOUT SOME OUTSIDE ELEMENT WOULD ASSURE CONTINUATION OF THE STALEMATE, GIVEN THE PARTIES' DIFFERING POSITIONS ON FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF FACT AND APPROACH. WE THINK A FRESH APPROACH COULD BEGIN WITH FACT-FINDING TO ESTABLISH A DATA BASE FROM WHICH A CLEAR DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM CAN BE DERIVED. THIS WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE -- AND PROBABLY INDISPENSABLE -- ROLE FOR AN OUTSIDE TECHNICAL EXPERT
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OR EXPERTS. THE IBRD WOULD BE AN OBVIOUS SOURCE OF SUCH TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, AND THE NON-POLITICAL NATURE OF THE BANK ALONG WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF DEEPER IBRD INVOLVEMENT LEADING EVENTUALLY TO FINANCING ANY NECESSARY INFRA-STRUCTURE COULD HAVE SOME APPEAL TO THE PARTIES. IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO BUILD ON THE PRECEDENT OF THE EXISTING JOINT RIVERS COMMISSION IN SOME WAY, PREFERABLY BY RECONSTITUTING THE

COMMISSION TO INCLUDE A NEUTRAL THIRD PARTY OR PARTIES
APPOINTED WITH THE CONSENT OF BOTH DISPUTANTS.

4. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE ROLE WE ARE SUGGESTING
FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS
UNORTHODOX IN THAT SUCH AN INITIATIVE IN THE UN
FRAMEWORK WOULD NORMALLY COME FROM THE SECRETARY
GENERAL OR THE SECURITY COUNCIL. NEITHER WOULD BE
WELCOMED BY THE INDIANS BECAUSE EACH WOULD IMPLY THE
SORT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE DISPUTE WHICH
THEY WISH TO AVOID. THE GA PRESIDENT COULD MORE
CONVINCINGLY PRESENT HIS ACTIONS AS A PERSONAL
INITIATIVE, WHILE RELATING HIS INTEREST TO AN
UNDERSTANDABLE DESIRE TO AVOID INTRODUCING UNNECESSARY
CONTROVERSY INTO THE GA DEBATES. AS A SRI LANKAN,

AMERASINGHE WOULD ALSO HAVE A NATURAL INTEREST IN
FACILITATING THE QUIET RESOLUTION OF A DISPUTE
BETWEEN TWO NEIGHBORS WITH WHICH HIS NATION
MAINTAINS GOOD RELATIONS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE
DUTIES OF A GA PRESIDENT ARE TIME-CONSUMING, BUT
WE ARE NOT SUGGESTING THAT HE ENGAGE HIMSELF IN AN
ON-GOING GOOD OFFICES ROLE; HE WOULD MERELY MAKE
THE SUGGESTION TO THE TWO PARTIES AND OFFER TO LEND
THE PRESTIGE OF HIS OFFICE TO ANY ANNOUNCEMENT THAT
MIGHT ACCOMPANY AN AGREEMENT. IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE
FOR MEMBERS OF THE SRI LANKAN DELEGATION OR THE
UN SECRETARIAT TO ASSIST IN WORKING OUT DETAILS IF
THE PARTIES REQUEST IT;

5; BEFORE PROCEEDING ANY FURTHER, WE WOULD APPRECIATE
THE VIEWS OF ADDRESSEES; YOU SHOULD NOT DISCUSS THIS
IDEA OR ANY ASPECTS OF IT WITH OTHERS; ANY PROSPECT
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OF SUCCESS WOULD BE SERIOUSLY DIMINISHED IF IT WERE
PERCEIVED AS AN AMERICAN INITIATIVE. FOR YOUR
BACKGROUND, WE ARE POUCHING AN ANALYSIS OF THE LEGAL
ASPECTS OF THIS DISPUTE AND AN INR PAPER ON THE NATURE
AND HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM. YOUR RESPONSE REQUESTED
BY COB HERE OCTOBER 5. KISSINGER

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NNN

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